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INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUCNOSC/ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY COOPERATION IN EUROPE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L BAKU 000094

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/19/2017

TAGS: PGOV PREL KDEM PHUM AJ

SUBJECT: AZERBAIJANI OPPOSITION PARTY GRANTED ACCESS TO POSSESSIONS TWO MONTHS AFTER EVICTION

REF: A. BAKU 00062

1B. BAKU 06 1714

Classified By: DEPUTY CHIEF OF MISSION JASON P. HYLAND PER 1.4(B,D)

11. (SBU) Nearly two months after being evicted from its downtown office space, the opposition Popular Front Party (PFP) was granted full access to its belongings January 19. During the November 25 eviction, the GOAJ had removed PFP's belongings from the 33 Khagani location, leaving them at a distant, run-down building designated by the State Property Committee to be PFP's "new office" (see reftels). Citing problems with the condition of the building, as well as its location on the outskirts of Baku, PFP stated that the party would work out of opposition Azerbaijani Democratic Party headquarters - the location to which PFP attempted to move its possessions. However, until January 19, police prevented party members from moving their possessions, sometimes claiming that they were acting under orders from the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA).

12. (C) The GOAJ's decision to finally allow PFP access to its belongings appears to have occurred as a direct result of Embassy pressure. After the Ambassador raised USG concerns with Foreign Minister Mammadyarov in a January 18 meeting, he phoned her shortly after the meeting to assure her that the issue would be immediately resolved. He also asked that Embassy officials witness the January 19 moving process.

13. (C) Emboffs observed the January 19 moving process, which Deputy Police Chief Yashar Aliyev oversaw. While roughly a dozen police officers were present, there were no representatives from either the Baku Mayor's Office or the State Property Committee, two GOAJ bodies involved in earlier discussions with PFP on the property issue. The process was carried out in a peaceful and organized manner. Aliyev and PFP Deputy Chair Mustafayev agreed that PFP members would remove all property that was in good condition, after which experts would assess the damaged property to determine what could be repaired and the price that would be awarded for property beyond repair. Aliyev told Poloff that total damages would be decided within a week, after which PFP would be compensated. PFP Press Officer Isaak Avazoglu reported that some expensive press equipment was missing, including a video camera, lights, and microphones. He said that the party would file a claim with the GOAJ for the missing property.

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